



UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
United States Patent and Trademark Office
Address: COMMISSIONER FOR PATENTS
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450
www.uspto.gov

APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/792,351	03/03/2004	Diana Lynne Gann	9567	4523

27752 7590 12/06/2006

THE PROCTER & GAMBLE COMPANY
INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY DIVISION
WINTON HILL BUSINESS CENTER - BOX 161
6110 CENTER HILL AVENUE
CINCINNATI, OH 45224

EXAMINER

BOGART, MICHAEL G

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
----------	--------------

3761

DATE MAILED: 12/06/2006

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary	Application No.	Applicant(s)	
	10/792,351	GANN ET AL.	
	Examiner	Art Unit	
	Michael G. Bogart	3761	

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --
Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 21 September 2006.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 14-25 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 14-25 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☒ The drawing(s) filed on 13 March 2006 is/are: a) ☒ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
 Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
 Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892) | 4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413) |
| 2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) | Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____ |
| 3) <input type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08) | 5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application |
| Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____ | 6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

DETAILED ACTION

Claim Objections

Claims 15 and 16 are objected to because of the following informalities:

Claim 15 recites the limitation "said plunger" in line 3. There is insufficient antecedent basis for this limitation in the claim.

Claim 16 depends from canceled claim 1. Appropriate correction is required.

Claim Rejections – 35 USC § 102/103

The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. § 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

This application currently names joint inventors. In considering patentability of the claims under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a), the examiner presumes that the subject matter of the various claims was commonly owned at the time any inventions covered therein were made absent any evidence to the contrary. Applicant is advised of the obligation under 37 CFR 1.56 to point out

Art Unit: 3761

the inventor and invention dates of each claim that was not commonly owned at the time a later invention was made in order for the examiner to consider the applicability of 35 U.S.C. § 103(c) and potential 35 U.S.C. § 102(e), (f) or (g) prior art under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a).

Claims 14-25 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by or, in the alternative, under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious over Buck *et al.* (US 6,254, 566 B1)(Hereinafter "Buck").

Regarding claim 14, Buck teaches a tampon (40) and a tampon applicator (20) in combination for expulsion of said tampon (40) into a vaginal cavity of a female user, comprising:

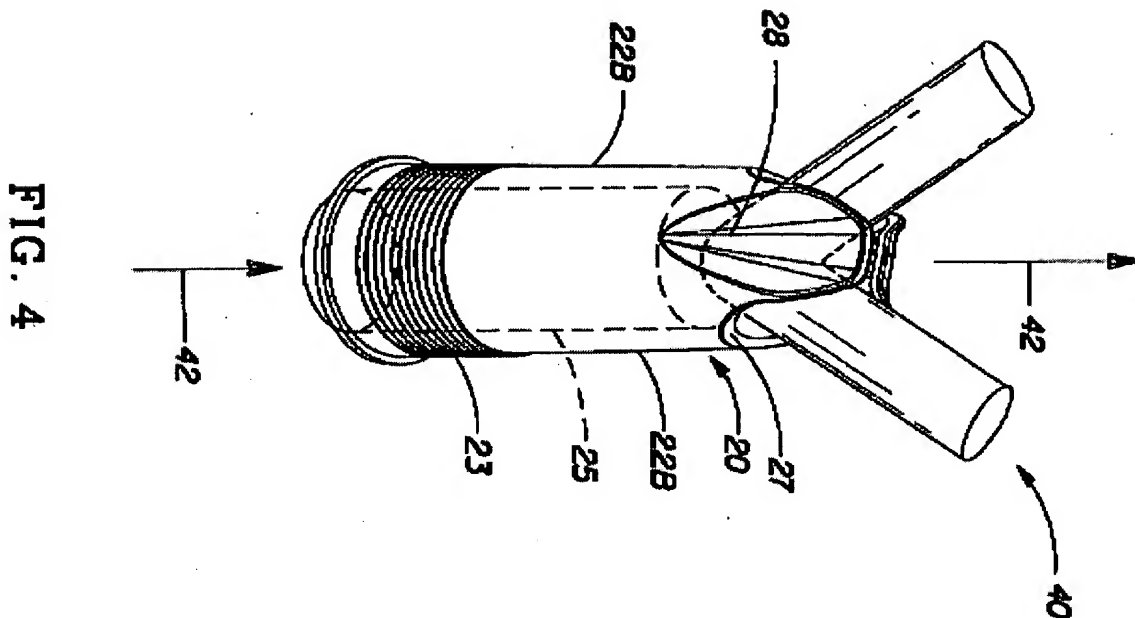
said tampon applicator (20) comprising a tampon holder tube (22);

said tampon holder tube (22) comprising a hollow interior portion, an interior surface (22A), an exterior surface (22B), a longitudinal axis (42), an outer perimeter, a first end (24) dimensioned for insertion into said vaginal cavity, a second end (21) positioned oppositely to said first end (24);

an end expulsion force increaser (28) and at least one side expulsion member (26, 27) positioned at said first end (24) of said tampon holder tube (22), said tampon (40) being housed within said hollow interior portion of said tampon holder tube (22) in a pre-expelled position;

said tampon (40) comprising a fluid permeable bag and absorbent material loosely dispersed within said permeable bag, said tampon (40) being housed within said hollow interior portion of said tampon holder tube (22) in a pre-expelled position; and

wherein an axial force to expel said tampon (40) from said tampon holder tube (22) has a inherently greater axial force to expel said tampon (40) from said reinforced end expulsion force increaser (28, 30) than from said side expulsion member (26, 27)(see fig. 4, *infra*).



Regarding the functional limitations, apparatus claims must be structurally distinguishable over the prior art. MPEP § 2114.

Where applicant claims a composition in terms of a function, property or characteristic and the composition of the prior art is the same as that of the claim but the function is not explicitly disclosed by the reference, the examiner may make a rejection under both 35 U.S.C. § 102 and 103, expressed as a 102/103 rejection. “There is nothing inconsistent in concurrent rejections for obviousness under 35 U.S.C. § 103 and for anticipation under 35 U.S.C. § 102.” *In re Best*, 562 F.2d 1252, 1255 n.4, 195 USPQ 430, 433 n.4 (CCPA 1977). This same rationale should also apply to product, apparatus, and process claims claimed in terms of function, property or characteristic. Therefore, a 35 U.S.C. § 102/103 rejection is appropriate for these types of claims as well as for composition claims. MPEP § 2112.

Art Unit: 3761

Regarding claim 15, Buck teaches a side expulsion member (26, 27) that has an internal dimension that is capable of increasing to a deployed width as the plunger (25) expels the tampon (40) from the holder tube (22).

Claim 16 is interpreted herein as depending from claim 14. Further regarding claim 16, Buck teaches a plurality of side expulsion zones (26).

Regarding claims 17, 18 and 22, Buck teaches that the end expulsion force increaser causes the tampon (40) to simultaneously shorten and expand because it resists forward movement of the tampon (40) until it reaches a breaking point where tampon is forced forward by plunger (17).

Regarding claims 19-21, Buck teaches multiple slots, voids or weakened areas (26) at the first end of the tube (22).

Regarding claim 23, Buck teaches that the end expulsion force increaser (28) is a curved projection.

Regarding claims 24 and 25, Buck teaches that the axis of the tampon (40) reorients itself once it has been expelled.

Response to Arguments

Applicant's arguments with respect to claims 14-25 have been considered but are moot in view of the new ground(s) of rejection.


Conclusion

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Michael Bogart whose telephone number is (571) 272-4933.

In the event the examiner is not available, the Examiner's supervisor, Tatyana Zalukaeva may be reached at phone number (571) 272-1115. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is (571) 273-8300 for formal communications. For informal communications, the direct fax to the Examiner is (571) 273-4933.

Any inquiry of a general nature or relating to the status of this application or proceeding should be directed to the receptionist whose telephone number is (571) 272-3700.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).


Michael Bogart
4 December 2006

TATYANA ZALUKAEVA
SUPERVISORY PRIMARY EXAMINER

